

Henderson Co. Fruit Growing

Henderson county by reason of location, climate and soil enjoys some of the best fruit growing possibilities to be found in the south.

Fruit growing for domestic and commercial purposes has passed the experimental stage in Henderson county. It has been found to be a most profitable industry.

Although the number of fruit growers in this county are many, few efforts have been made to grow fruits for commercial purposes, but these few instances have invariably met with success.

The least trouble has not been experienced in growing fruit in Henderson county for home consumption and there are hundreds of good small orchards in the county, but practical common-sense fruitgrowing has been tried only by a few lovers of fine fruit.

Although pears, peaches, cherries, apples and other fruits can be profitably grown here, apple growing has been declared by fruit experts to be the crop under which the county should lay particular stress.

From the experience and tests made at fairs and expositions through the west, as well as at home, the western North Carolina apple has already taken a conspicuous place in the eyes of the fruit growers and dealers of America.

There are hundreds upon hundreds of acres of land in Henderson county on the mountain slopes and ridges that are available for apple orchards, the most of which can be put in excellent order at comparatively little cost.

Various practical fruitgrowers estimate that from \$10 to \$20 per acre apple orchard lands can be secured and orchards planted and brought to a state of perfection at the end of the seventh year for from \$50 to \$60 per acre, and that these orchards will, at the end of that period produce from \$150 to \$200 per acre annually. It has been stated that the cost of bringing this orchard land to a state of perfection might go as high as \$100 per acre, and that with improved methods and increased information obtainable to-

day by orchard men, the apples at the end of the seventh year will bring, for various reasons, a much higher figure than those given and that the orchard that costs \$14.30 per acre for seven years or a total at the end of that period of \$100, at the end of the seventh year will be bringing in a gross income of \$300.

There are lands obtainable in large and small quantities in different parts of Henderson county but in most cases only small tracts of can be secured on account of the topographical conditions of the country.

Many inquiries have been made into the adaptability of this section for the raising of small fruits such as the strawberry, blackberry, raspberry, etc., and various fruit experts have declared the conditions in Henderson county to be most favorable to the growing of such fruits.

Among the fruitgrowers of Henderson county who are convinced that it is a splendid paying industry demanding comparatively small investment in capital and time, are Capt. M. C. Toms, the king of fruitgrowers of this county, J. K. Hill of Dana, Scott Freeman, E. O. Merrell and Claude Freeman of Bat Cave, Dr. J. S. Brown and others who follow this line of work on a paying plan.

Captain Toms, who is reaping satisfactory rewards from his three orchards, the famous Essawah Orchards on Jump Off mountain, the orchard about eight miles from town on the Ginseng farm and the recently purchased orchard farm on Mt. Hebron, known as the Solomon Jones farm.

The Essawah orchards contain about 6,000 trees, about 4,500 of which are apple and the remainder in cherry and pear trees. On the Ginseng farm there are approximately 1,000 apple and peach trees. There are about 250 well-grown trees on the Solomon Jones farm.

Knowing the success that Captain Toms has made of the fruit industry, a representative of this paper called on him for an expression of his views on the methods and possibilities of fruit growing in Henderson county.

Although Haywood county produces more

fruit than any other county in western North Carolina, Captain Toms is authority for the statement that Henderson county has equally as good advantages for fruit growing as Haywood county enjoys. The difference is that several years ago a number of people in Haywood county were interested in planting orchards for commercial purposes and that a success was made of the undertaking, while Henderson county had no one to take up the industry, hence its fruit-growing possibilities have not become so well known to the country as those of Haywood county. Experience has taught the captain that fruit growing pays in Henderson county. He did not engage in the business for fun or pastime. It was strictly a business proposition, which experience taught was a good paying one.

In fruit growing two things are most necessary, says Captain Toms. First, the orchard must have a good, stiff clay soil or chard must necessarily be near some shipping point if the owner is to reap the greatest results will not be obtained. There are fine available orchard lands near shipping points and there are other lands fully as good if not better many miles from any railroad station. Hauling by wagon is expensive and necessarily bruises the fruit more or less, and it is for these reasons that the captain advises the cultivation of fruits near shipping points. Years of observation has taught him that the finest of orchards cannot be had on bottom lands in Henderson county.

Conditions are so diversified in this county it is almost impossible to name an average price for available orchard lands in the opinion of Capt. Toms, for land can be purchased anywhere from \$5 to \$50 an acre. To obtain best results, such lands should be between 2,400 and 3,000 feet in elevation, steep hill sides being suitable in most cases.

Under ordinary circumstances, trees when planted at two years old, will bear six or seven years afterwards and in ten years they will be self-sustaining. Some of Captain Toms' nine-year old trees produced as high as thirteen and one-half bushels of perfect fruit. This brought \$1 per bushel in the orchard. The trees will continue to grow

and will later bear forty or fifty bushels of excellent fruit. When well kept the trees lives for an almost indefinite period.

Trees should be planted at least thirty-five feet apart for best results.

To prospective fruit growers the care and attention Captain Toms gives his orchards would be of valuable interest. No effort is made to produce any money-making crop on the orchard lands, which is plowed after a few light frosts in the fall. The weeds and clover are plowed under and the soil is kept in a mellow condition. Dormant spray is given the trees about the first of December. They are trimmed in January and February, and grafting is done in February and March. The trees are sprayed when the petals begin to fall and six weeks later they are sprayed again with a solution of one gallon of lime sulphur and two pounds of arsenite of lead to fifty gallons of water. The dormant spray is much stronger there being only about eight gallons of water in the solution.

J. K. Hill of Dana is devoting considerable attention to his orchard with the view to making it a paying investment. His apples are understood to have won recognition at the state fair, where he succeeded in landing a valuable prize. He has a fine orchard and it is being improved from time to time.

Scott Freeman and E. O. Merrell have a fine 25 acre orchard near Bat Cave on which are growing approximately 1,500 apple trees 200 peach and 100 cherry trees, most all of which are in bearing condition. Owing to the blight all efforts, to raise pears on this farm, which is located on Little Pisgah mountain, have been abandoned. Year before last more than 2,000 cans of peaches were prepared from this orchard. Another fruit grower at Bat Cave is Claude Freeman, who has about 800 trees on Charlie mountain several hundred feet above Bat Cave village. He gathered some fine fruit from this orchard last year.

Another man who is endeavoring to make a success of fruit growing is Dr. J. S. Brown on his orchard of about 3,000 apple, plum, peach and cherry trees at Tuxedo. Dr. Brown is devoting considerable time and attention to this orchard, which he has owned for several years, and he has excellent prospects of a good paying business.

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